



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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January is National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

Bismarck, N.D. – January is National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, and the North Dakota Department of Health is reminding women of the importance of regular Pap tests, according to Barb Steiner, *Women's Way* Program Clinical Coordinator.

Although cervical cancer is highly preventable through screening and other preventive measures, about 4,200 women die from the disease in the United States each year. Half of all cervical cancers occur in women who have never had a Pap test.

“Having a Pap test regularly is the key to preventing cervical cancer,” said Steiner. “A Pap test can detect the abnormal changes in the cervical cells before they become cancerous. If cancer does occur, the Pap test can find it early when it is easier to treat.”

Women still need to continue getting regular Pap tests after they have stopped having children. According to the American Cancer Society, cervical cancer tends to occur in midlife. Most cases are found in women younger than 50. However, the risk of developing cervical cancer is still present for women older than 50, so it is important for women to continue to have Pap tests until their health-care provider recommends that a Pap test is no longer needed.

While routine Pap tests are the best means of detecting cervical cancer at an early stage, vaccines also have the potential to protect young women (and men) from the disease. Two vaccines are now available to help protect against HPV (human papillomavirus) types 16 and 18, the two types of HPV that cause most cervical cancers. However, women who have been vaccinated still should get regular Pap tests.

“Unfortunately, many women do not get regular Pap tests because they are uninsured or underinsured and can't afford the test,” Steiner said. “The good news is that *Women's Way* may be able to help women pay for their Pap tests.”

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

Women's Way, North Dakota's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, is available to eligible North Dakota women ages 40 through 64. *Women's Way* may provide a way to pay for pelvic exams, Pap test, clinical breast exams and mammograms.

To learn more about *Women's Way* or to see if you are eligible, call 1.800.44.WOMEN or visit www.ndhealth.gov/womensway.

More information about cervical cancer, HPV and the HPV vaccination can be found by visiting www.cancer.org or www.cdc.gov/hpv/vaccine.html. For more information about Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, contact Barb Steiner, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2333.

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